DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 158 256 CS 004 313

AUTHOR Griffith, E. H.
TITLE Minimal Competency Exam Program.
PUB DATE May 77
NOTE 15p.; Paper presented at the Annual Meeting of the Northern Illinois Association for Educational Research Evaluation and Development (1st, Bloomingdale, Illinois, May 1977)

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Academic Achievement; *Basic Skills; *Educational Assessment; *Educational Objectives; Language Arts; Mathematics; *Performance Based Education; Reading Skills; Senior High Schools; *Student Evaluation; *Testing Programs

ABSTRACT

The high school minimal competency examination described in this document is part one of a three-part program that requires that all students satisfactorily complete tests in reading, language arts, and mathematics prior to receiving a high school diploma. The document outlines the test development and assessment program and describes the plan for phase two, that will require junior high school students to pass a minimal competency examination before entering high school, and phase three, which will test third grade students for areas of weakness before admitting them to the intermediate level. Competency goals and objectives for the high school level are listed for (1) mathematics--simple arithmetic, computation of percentages, measurement and the metric system, fractions, and the practical application of mathematics in money, budget, grocery costs, taxes, and loan interest; (2) reading--filling out forms and applications, following directions, discerning fact from opinion, reading labels, road signs, contracts, and reference materials, and identifying the main idea in a paragraph; and (3) language arts--following oral directions, spelling, writing checks, personal and business letters, the use of basic grammar, planning a speech, and recognizing the contextual meaning of words. (MAI)

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PEORIA PUBLIC SCHOOLS

January 23, 1978

MINIMAL COMPETENCY EXAM PROGRAM

Report Prepared by: E. H. Griffith, Ph.D.
Director of Research
Peoria Public Schools
Peoria, Illinois

INTRODUCTION:

In March of 1976, the Peoria Public Schools began developing plans for the implementation of the Minimal Competency Exam Program. The plans and programs were developed during the 1976-77 and 1977-78 school years. Full implementation of the high school portion of the program, phase one, is scheduled for the graduating class of 1980. The Board of Education has adopted a policy to require all students to satisfactorily complete examinations in reading, language arts and mathematics prior to being awarded a diploma from the Peoria Public Schools. (Figure 1)

EXAMINATION PROGRAM:

Students will be provided five opportunities to pass the examinations prior to their scheduled high school graduation.

1. The examinations will be administered to all students during the fall semester of the junior year. Those students who successfully pass the examinations will proceed through the remainder of their high school years meeting the predetermined graduation requirements.

2. Those students who fail one or more of the exams may elect to retake the exams that were failed at the end of the second semester of the junior year. It is recommended that only students who have studied on their own or received some type of independent tutoring attempt the exams during the second semester testing.

3. Special refresher courses in the three academic areas will be offered during Summer School. Opportunities will be provided for the student to enroll in one or more of the refresher courses and take the examination(s) at the end of the course of study. Students who have studied on their own or who have received independent tutoring may also take the exams at this time.

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FIGURE 1

Article 5 Students - Board Policy 5127.3

MINIMAL COMPETENCY EXAM PROGRAM

That all students graduating during the 1979-80 school year and thereafter be required to satisfactorily pass Minimal Competency Examinations in Mathematics, Reading, and Language Arts, prior to receiving a graduation diploma from any District #150 high school.

That students who do not satisfactorily pass the Minimal Competency Examinations by the end of their senior year, but do meet all other high school graduation requirements, may be awarded a Certificate of Attendance.

Adopted: February 20, 1978

2.

4. Students entering their senior year who have attempted but have been unsuccessful in passing one or more of the exams will be required to enroll in the appropriate refresher course(s) the first semester. The examination(s) will again be administered at the end of the refresher course(s).

5. Students who have not passed the examination(s) by the second semester of the senior year will be required to enroll in one or more of the refresher courses. The examination, once more, will be given at the end of each of the refresher courses.

If the student still has not successfully passed the required examinations by the end of the second semester of the senior year he or she may continue in high school and continue to attempt to meet the graduation requirements. If the student has met all other requirements for graduation but has not passed one or more of the examinations, the student may elect to receive a "Certificate of Attendance" instead of the diploma. If the student elects to leave high school with or without a "Certificate of Attendance", he or she may contact the school at a later date to establish a testing time to again attempt to pass the examinations. The student may continue to attempt to pass the examinations until he or she reaches the maximum age for free public school education as defined in Chapter 122 Section 10-20.12 of the School Code of Illinois.

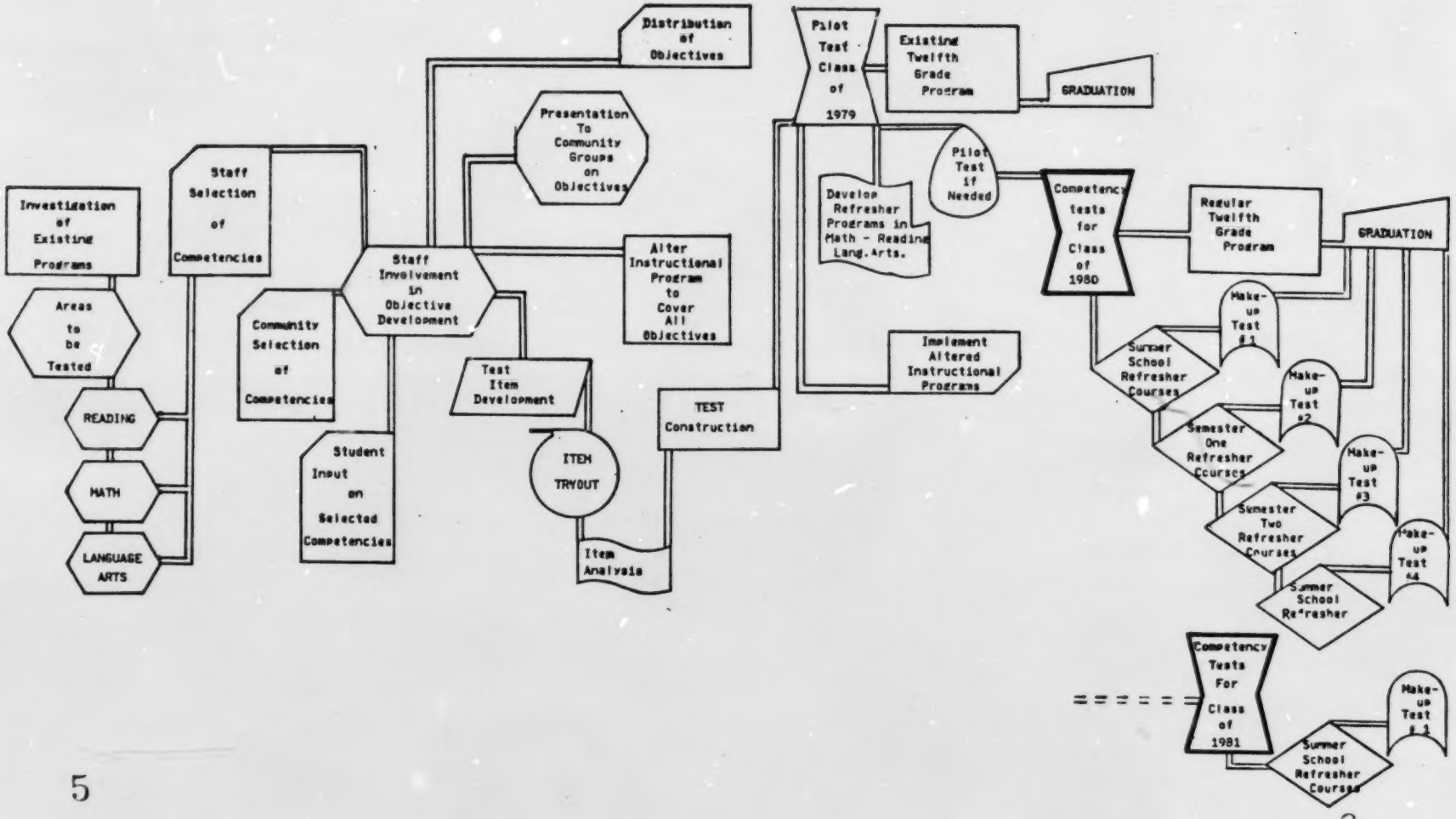
HISTORY AND BACKGROUND:

A plan to implement the competency exam program was developed early in the Spring of 1976 (Figure 2). The plan required the involvement of professional staff members, students, and community citizens. Each of the three groups played an important role in the development of the program.

The content of the three examinations was based on results from a survey sent to approximately 1,200 staff members and 1,300 community citizens. The results of the modified Delphi Survey were analyzed and ranked in order of importance according to the participants responses. The rank order was based on the importance of skills to be attained by the high school graduate.

FIGURE 2

PLANS FOR IMPLEMENTING THE PEORIA COMPETENCY EXAM PROGRAM



Three groups of classroom teachers working with a curriculum specialist developed test objectives for each of the content areas. The test objectives served as the base for the development of test items for each of the three examinations.

Test item validation was completed during the second semester of the 1976-77 school year and the first semester of the 1977-78 school year. During the item validation study, test items were administered to sophomores, juniors, and seniors. It was found that juniors scored significantly higher than sophomores, but no significant difference existed between junior and senior students.

As a part of the implementation process, an assessment program was conducted with all juniors (class of 1979) during December of 1977. Approximately 1,400 junior students were required to take the three competency exams. Students were tested in all five high schools under conditions as similar as possible to those anticipated in the coming years.

Results of the assessment programs indicated that the Minimal Competency Exams Program for high school graduation is adequately developed for implementation during the 1978-79 school year.

MINIMAL COMPETENCY EXAMS AT THE ELEMENTARY LEVEL

A second phase of the Minimal Competency Exam Program has been developed for students being promoted from grade eight to grade nine. Students will be required to pass minimal competency exams in reading, language arts, and math before entering high school. The exams will be administered to students at the end of grade seven. Those students who do not successfully pass one or more of the tests will be required to participate in special courses of instruction during first and/or second semester of grade eight. Students will be given a minimum of four opportunities to satisfactorily pass the exams before being retained in grade eight. The Minimal Competency Exam Program for promotion from grade eight to grade nine will be fully implemented during the 1979-80 academic year. A pilot program to evaluate the

tests will be administered during the 1978-79 school year.

The third and final phase of the program will consist of a series of three exams to be administered to students at the end of the third grade. The intent of the third grade exams are to identify weaknesses in reading, language arts, and math skills that need to be strengthened in order for the student to adaquately cope with the more complex subject matter taught in the intermediate grades. It is anticipated that the third grade program will be implemented during the 1980-81 school year.

RESULTS OF THE HIGH SCHOOL ASSESSMENT PROGRAM - DECEMBER 1977:

The assessment program provided information which allowed the staff the opportunity to evaluate the Minimal Competency Exam Program. In addition, the results obtained permitted a comparison of the achievement of students and identified competency objectives. Areas of strengths and weaknesses of the students were identified. The combined results of all students identified areas of the instructional program that need to be strengthened in order to better achieve the defined objectives.

The data reported on the attached pages provide results in terms of the percent of students correctly answering test items measuring each objective. Three test items were used to measure each objective, therefore, the percent figures reported represent the mean number of students correctly answering each set of three test items.

SUMMARY OF RESULTS:

When judging strengths and weaknesses of students and/or the academic program it must be remembered that the criterion for such judgment is in terms of the identified goals and objectives. In general students scored the highest in reading and the lowest in mathematics. Students scored well in specific areas of language arts but scored rather low in other areas.

HIGH SCHOOL MATHEMATICS COMPETENCY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

	RESULTS
1. ADD, SUBTRACT, MULTIPLY AND DIVIDE WHOLE NUMBERS	
A. Given four or more whole numbers with different numbers of digits written horizontally, the student will be able to determine the sum.	94%
B. Given two whole numbers of three or more digits, the student will be able to subtract one number from another with regrouping (borrowing).	93%
C. Given two whole numbers of two or more digits, the student will be able to multiply one number by another number.	79%
D. Given two whole numbers, the student will be able to divide a two or more digit number by a one-digit number resulting in a quotient containing zeros.	81%
E. Given two whole numbers, the student will be able to divide a three or more digit number by a two-digit number resulting in a remainder written as a fraction.	74%
II. COMPUTE PERCENTAGES OF WHOLE NUMBERS	
A. Given a whole number percent between 1% and 100% and a whole number, the student will be able to compute the percent of a whole number.	63%
B. Given two whole numbers, the student will be able to determine what percent one whole number is of another whole number.	45%
III. BALANCE A CHECKBOOK GIVEN DEPOSITS AND DOLLAR AMOUNTS OF CHECKS WRITTEN	
A. Given no more than ten entries of less than five hundred dollars each, deposits and checks, the student will be able to balance a checkbook.	70%
IV. COMPUTE CHANGE FOR THE PURCHASE OF RETAIL ITEMS	
A. Given the cost of each of five items, the amount of sales tax, and the amount given in payment, the student will be able to determine the coins and bills needed for correct change.	73%
V. PREPARE A HOUSEHOLD BUDGET GIVEN MAJOR EXPENSE ITEMS	
A. Given the annual income and the percent and/or fraction of the income to be spent on each item, the student will be able to compute the amount to be allocated to the various items in the monthly budget.	53%
B. Given the amount to be saved monthly, the student will be able to determine the number of months needed to save an amount of money.	51%
C. Given the total amount to be saved and the number of months in which to save it, the student will be able to determine the amount to be saved each month.	81%
VI. ADD, SUBTRACT, MULTIPLY AND DIVIDE DECIMALS	
A. Given three or more decimal numbers of different place values written horizontally requiring regrouping (carrying), the student will be able to determine the sum.	71%

B. Given two decimal numbers of different place values written horizontally requiring regrouping (borrowing), the student will be able to subtract one decimal number from the other decimal number. 75%

C. Given two decimal numbers, the student will be able to multiply one decimal number by another decimal number. 64%

D. Given two decimal numbers, the student will be able to divide one decimal number by another decimal number. 66%

E. Given a decimal number, the student will be able to round it to the nearest hundredth. 56%

VII. ACCURATELY READ AND USE UNITS OF MEASURES, e.g. MILES, FEET, HOURS, POUNDS, ETC.

A. Given a list of units and the number of units for time (seconds, minutes, hours, days, months, years), length (inches, feet, yards, miles), capacity cups, pints, quarts, gallons), or weight (ounces, pounds, and tons), the student will be able to arrange three of the measures in order from smallest to largest. 56%

B. Given two of the following: distance, rate, or time, the student will be able to determine the missing quantity. 74%

VIII. ADD A COLUMN OF NUMBERS SUCH AS A GROCERY LIST OF FIFTEEN ITEMS

A. Given a list of ten to fifteen grocery items, including multiples of single priced items, the student will be able to determine the sum. 68%

IX. DETERMINE SIMPLE INTEREST COST ON A LOAN GIVEN THE INTEREST RATE

A. Given the equation: interest = principal x rate x time, the student will be able to determine simple interest for a loan, (rate 1-20%, or fractional part) (years 1-25 or fractional part). 39%

X. CORRECTLY COMPLETE THE SHORT FORM FEDERAL AND STATE INCOME TAX FORM GIVEN THE NECESSARY TAX DATA

A. Given the necessary raw data, the student will be able to determine the required information for completing the short form federal income tax form. 34%

XI. COMPARE THE COST OF GROCERY ITEMS AND COMPUTE THE COST PER OUNCE FOR EACH ITEM

A. Given the cost and number of ounces of various sizes of grocery items, the student will be able to determine which size grocery item costs the least per ounce. 42%

XII. INTERPRET AND UTILIZE UNITS OF THE METRIC SYSTEM

A. Given a list of units and the number of units for length (millimeters, centimeters, decimeters, meters, kilometers), capacity (milliliters, centiliters, deciliters, liters), or weight (milligrams, centigrams, decigrams, grams, kilograms), the student will be able to arrange three measures in order from smallest to largest. 39%

B. Given an object, the student will be able to select the appropriate metric unit of measure. 58%

XIII. ADD, SUBTRACT, MULTIPLY AND DIVIDE FRACTIONS

A. Given two mixed numbers, the student will be able to determine the sum. 60%

B. Given two fractional or mixed numbers, the student will be able to subtract one fractional or mixed number from the other. 63%

C. Given two mixed numbers, the student will be able to multiply one mixed number by another mixed number. 46%

D. Given two fractional or mixed numbers, the student will be able to divide one fractional or mixed number by another fractional or mixed number. 55%

XIV. COMPUTE NET PAY GIVEN GROSS PAY AND DEDUCTIONS

A. Given gross pay and deductions, the student will be able to compute the net pay. 61%

HIGH SCHOOL READING COMPETENCY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

RESULTS

I. READ AND FILL OUT FORMS REQUESTING SPECIFIC INFORMATION, e.g. EMPLOYMENT APPLICATION, LOAN APPLICATION, AND COLLEGE ENTRANCE FORMS.

A. Given a set of instructions and essential biographical data such as name, address, birthdate, social security number, sex, telephone number, previous employment, education, and signature, the student will be able to select the correct information to complete informational forms. 79%

II. READ A SET OF DIRECTIONS AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING BY FOLLOWING THE PROCEDURES DESIGNATED EXACTLY

A. Given a set of written directions, the student will be able to answer specific questions about the directions; i.e. sequence of procedures, ingredients, measures, and materials used. 89%

B. Given a set of written directions, the student will be able to answer specific questions about the directions; i.e., time, abbreviations and temperatures. 87%

III. READ A NEWSPAPER ARTICLE AND DISTINGUISH FACTS FROM OPINIONS

A. Given a sample newspaper article, the student will be able to demonstrate the ability to distinguish written facts from opinions. 76%

IV. READ AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF A SPECIFIC SET OF INSTRUCTIONAL MATERIALS (INSTRUCTIONAL MANUAL) TO ACCOMPLISH A PARTICULAR TASK.

A. Given a set of illustrated instructions, the student will be able to answer specific questions about the sequence of procedures. 85%

B. Given a set of illustrated instructions, the student will be able to match illustrations to appropriate written instructions, pick out materials to use, and answer specific questions about understanding procedures. 89%

V. READ AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF LABELS ON COMMERCIAL PRODUCTS: e.g., TOXIC, HAZARDOUS, FLAMMABLE, AMMONIA, VITAMINS, DETERGENT.

A. Given the instructions from the label of a potentially dangerous commercial product, the student will be able to identify the meaning of signs, symbols, cautions, and/or directions. 85%

B. Given the instructions from the label of a pharmaceutical product, the student will be able to identify the meaning of directions, signs, symbols, and/or cautions against certain dangers. 90%

VI. RECOGNIZE AND INTERPRET COMMON ROAD SIGNS

A. Given a road sign, the student will be able to identify the meaning of the road sign. 94%

B. Given the meaning of a road sign, the student will be able to identify the correct sign. 94%

C. Given the color of a road sign, the student will be able to identify its meaning. 87%

VII. READ, UNDERSTAND, AND BE ABLE TO USE INFORMATION FROM THE TELEPHONE DIRECTORY

A. Given a page from a telephone book, the student will be able to use specific information to find emergency numbers for fire, rescue, police, and/or ambulance. 83%

B. Given a page of alphabetical listings from a telephone book, the student will be able to use specific information to interpret abbreviations, to locate types of services, and/or to find specific locations. 77%

C. Given a classified section of the telephone book, the student will be able to find specific information regarding types of services, hours, and/or locations. 88%

VIII. READ AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF A SIMPLE CONTRACTUAL AGREEMENT: e.g., APARTMENT LEASE, LOAN AGREEMENT.

A. Given a sample agreement (credit card form, lease, voter registration, library card application, services contracts, savings account agreement) the student will be able to answer questions regarding the terms agreed upon by the applicant. 78%

IX. DEMONSTRATE KNOWLEDGE OF THE USE FOR REFERENCE MATERIALS: e.g. DICTIONARY, TRAVEL GUIDE, ROAD ATLAS, AND ENCYCLOPEDIA.

A. Given examples from a dictionary, the student will be able to answer questions using guide words, selecting the correct definitions, and/or decoding phonetic respelling. 87%

B. Given a map, the student will be able to determine directions, utilize the map legend, and apply the coordinate system. 80%

C. Given information relative to an encyclopedia, the student will be able to demonstrate specific skills by determining topics, utilizing alphabetical order, selecting an appropriate volume and/or locating factual information. 87%

D. Given information from a travel guide, the student will be able to identify addresses, accomodations, restaurants, and/or points of interest. 79%

X. READ A PARAGRAPH AND IDENTIFY THE MAIN IDEA

A. Given several paragraphs, the student will be able to identify main ideas. 63%

B. Given a short story, the student will be able to identify details. 84%

C. Given a short story, the student will be able to identify sequence of events. 72%

D. Given a story of several paragraphs, the student will be able to identify cause and effect relationships. 83%

E. Given a short story, the student will be able to use context clues to answer specific questions. 89%

F. Given several paragraphs, the student will be able to identify the conclusions of a story. 76%

XI. READ AND DEMONSTRATE AN UNDERSTANDING OF AN ITEMIZED BILL FOR CAR SERVICE, HOSPITAL SERVICE, CAR INSURANCE, etc.

A. Given an itemized statement indicating costs for specific services and/or materials, the student will be able to answer questions regarding the items noted on the statement, the terms of the agreement, and the person, place or thing for which the statement was issued. 79%

HIGH SCHOOL LANGUAGE ARTS COMPETENCY GOALS AND OBJECTIVES RESULTS

I. LISTEN TO AND CORRECTLY INTERPRET A SET OF ORAL DIRECTIONS TO ACCOMPLISH A PARTICULAR TASK.

A. Given a set of oral instructions, the student will be able to identify the completed product. 81%

B. Given a set of oral instructions, the student will be able to answer questions pertaining to the sequence of the directions given. 86%

II. CORRECTLY SPELL FREQUENTLY USED WORDS

A. Given a set of words, the student will be able to select the word which is incorrectly spelled. 75%

B. Given a set of sentences which contain homonyms, the student will be able to select the sentence in which the homonym is used incorrectly. 78%

C. Given a paragraph containing commonly misspelled words, the student will be able to identify the lines containing misspelled words. 70%

III. PROPERLY WRITE A CHECK FOR A GIVEN AMOUNT OF MONEY

A. Given a facsimile of a check, the student will be able to identify proper information for each blank on the check. 95%

IV. CORRECTLY WRITE A PERSONAL LETTER

A. Given samples of personal letters, the student will be able to designate those parts which contain incorrect letter form and grammatical usage. 74%

V. CORRECTLY WRITE A BUSINESS LETTER IN TERMS OF STYLE AND FORM

A. Given examples of business letters, the student will be able to choose the letter which is most clear and brief in content. 75%

B. Given examples of business letters, the student will be able to identify the correct format; that is - heading, inside address, salutation, closing, signature, and body. 40%

VI. CORRECTLY USE CAPITAL LETTERS

A. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of correct capitalization of proper nouns, proper adjectives, and the pronoun, "I". 81%

B. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of correct capitalization at the beginning of a sentence. 81%

C. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to demonstrate knowledge of correct capitalization of titles of address, books, and periodicals. 84%

VII. CORRECTLY ADDRESS AN ENVELOPE

A. Given examples of block addressed envelopes, the student will be able to identify the correct format. 83%

VIII. DIFFERENTIATE BETWEEN A SENTENCE AND A FRAGMENT

A. Given statements, the student will be able to identify each as a complete or incomplete sentence. 85%

IX. BE ABLE TO PROOF-READ A PARAGRAPH AND MAKE THE NECESSARY CORRECTIONS

A. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to identify misspelled regular and irregular plural forms of words. 81%

B. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to identify correct comma punctuation for dates, addresses, interrupters, and introductory yes, and no. 57%

C. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to identify correct punctuation for end mark and abbreviation. 78%

D. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to recognize the correct use of apostrophes which indicate possession and contractions. 65%

E. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to identify improper verb forms and tenses. 70%

F. Given a paragraph, the student will be able to select the sentence which does not belong because it destroys the unity of the paragraph. 78%

X. CORRECTLY USE STANDARD ENGLISH USAGE FORMS IN WRITING A SIMPLE SENTENCE

A. Given a set of simple sentences, the student will be able to select the correct verb form to go with the subject. 56%

B. Given a set of simple sentences, the student will be able to select the correct personal pronoun form to use as the subject. 67%

C. Given a set of simple sentences, the student will be able to select the proper personal pronoun form used as the direct object or object of a preposition. 46%

XI. ORGANIZE MATERIAL FOR A SHORT SPEECH

A. Given a list of statements for a speech, the student will be able to organize the content in logical order for a presentation. 73%

XII. RECOGNIZE THE MEANING OF FREQUENTLY USED WORDS.

A. Given words from the 9th and 10th grade vocabulary lists used in sentences or phrases, the student will be able to choose the correct contextual meaning of each of the words. 80%